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WORLD

State Department set to reorganize security system, move 75 embassies

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WASHINGTON — Confronting growing terrorism, the State Department yesterday announced plans for a broad reorganization of its security system at home and abroad and a \$3.5 billion construction program that will include relocation of 75 embassies.

It accepted in broad outline the proposals from a panel headed by retired Adm. Bobby R. Inman, a former deputy director of Central Intelligence, Congress, with its power of the purse, is assumed to be in a generous mood regarding the costs because of recent attacks on Americans abroad.

Altogether, it said, 126 embassies or consulates, out of 262 in 130 countries, should be rebuilt or relocated. In addition it listed 210 buildings used by the United States Information Agency, the Agency for International Development or the Foreign Commercial Service of the Commerce Department as "candidates for inclusion in the building program."

"We don't expect to get everything we ask for in this program," a U.S. diplomat remarked, "but there really is no alternative to much of it."

The report mentioned in passing the intelligence threat implicit in the U.S. practice of hiring local nationals for embassy work in hostile countries.

Robert E. Lamb, assistant secretary of state for administration, said a reduction already was under way in the staff of 200 Soviet nationals employed by the embassy in Moscow. The Soviet Embassy here hires fewer than a dozen Americans. Around the world the U.S. employs 11,000 nationals.

But the construction program drew the most attention. It would be added to one now in progress under which 10 new embassies already are under construction. Mr. Inman's panel treated that as only a start.

Mr. Lamb said Secretary of State George P. Shultz accepted the panel's report "in principle," and that many of the recommended steps were being taken. The only reason for the hedged language, Mr. Lamb explained, was that Mr. Inman's group

had made 91 recommendations, some of which might not be adopted. But he left no doubt that the primary ones would be.

The program is expected to require — at least the construction phase of it — seven or eight years for completion. Mr. Lamb has been assigned to coordinate the undertaking.

Regarding internal organization, the study found security responsibility, allocated in the past as need arose, widely dispersed in several State Department offices.

The panel's judgment was blunt. It cited "dispersion of responsibility, a dramatically increasing workload, gross understaffing with a consequent inability to train properly, and a general loss of control over resources and priorities."

To correct the weakness it recommended the transfer of counterterrorist diplomacy directly to the under secretary for political affairs. Operational responsibility, to embrace an elite, highly trained corps of security agents, would fall under a new Bureau for Diplomatic Security, headed by an assistant secretary.

With time, it said, a new Diplomatic Security Service should take over protection of all visiting dignitaries from the Secret Service. Now, the Secret Service guards only heads of government and state, leaving their families and lesser officials to the State Department's own security service. The panel called that system "inexplicable."

"Understaffing has meant the agents have had to work longer hours with inadequate relief," it said, "enduring unusual stress and potentially compromising the safety of those they are assigned to protect."

Appointment of the panel last July followed a series of attacks on U.S. embassies abroad.